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Title: Requests the Central Government to take steps to withdraw the Notification regarding removal of coir from the restricted list of import items to save coir sector.

SHRI V.M. SUDHEERAN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Commerce vide Public Notice have made certain items including coir fibre, coir yarn and coir products freely importable to India, if imported from Sri Lanka and other Coir Industry in India is export oriented and labour oriented. It employs about five lakhs of workers of which 80 per cent are women.

Sri Lanka is the main competitor of Indian coir fibre, yarn and products in the world market. Sri Lankan prices of these items are much less than the prices in India. Large scale accumulation of stocks are held by coirfed and primary small scale producers in Kerala worth around Rs. 50 crore due to a slump in demand for coir yarn and products.

In these circumstances, it is very clear that the import of coir fibre, yarn and products would adversely affect the Indian coir industry leading to severe unemployment in this sector. The coir sector forms a major building block of the traditional industries in Kerala.

Both the manufacturers and the workers are agitated on the removal of restrictions on import. The Coir Board in its meeting on 12th October, 1998 has appealed to the Central Government to withdraw the Notificiation in question, which allowed the removal of coir from the restricted list of items of import.

I request the Governmment to take urgent steps to see that the Notification is withdrawn and the coir sector is saved.

I also request the Government to sanction at least Rs. 10 crore as financial assistance to the Kerala State Cooperative Coir Marketing Federation for activating distress purchase of coir yarn and products to tackle the serious situation arising out of accumulation of stock.

Sir, this is a very serious situation as far as coir industry is concerned. ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Now I call Shri Sudip Bandyopadhyay to speak.